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MEMOIR OF REV. LUCIAN GALTIER:

THE FIRST CATHOLIC PRIEST OF SAINT PAUL.

BY REV. JOHN IRELAND.

The name of Rev. LUCIAN GALTIER is inseparably interwoven with the early history of St. Paul. If any one man can be said to have been the founder of this city, in the beginnings of which there were many more or less concerned, the honor of the title is to be awarded to him. It was his little missionary chapel that grouped together the early settlers who were pitching their tents along the eastern bank of the Mississippi, and thus became the nucleus of the future city. The name he bestowed on the chapel was adopted by the new settlement, and retained by it as it grew up and developed into the St. Paul of to-day.

It is proper that the Minnesota Historical Society, whose object it is to collect and preserve whatever items of our history might hereafter prove of interest, should be possessed of the principal circumstances of the life of this venerable clergyman, more especially of those connected with the origin and growth of our city. The task is easy. The circumstances in the life of Father GALTIER, that could at any time have been of what we might call public interest, are few in number. His was the career of a humble, devoted priest of the Catholic church, noiselessly but faithfully fulfilling the every-day duties of his office—preaching, administering the sacraments, providing for the instruction of youth, visiting the sick. To rehearse his life in detail, would be to describe facts which, occurring as

they do in the life of almost every priest, are of a nature too well known to be deserving of a special mention. Suffice to say that, of those ordinary, humble duties, Father GALTIER ever acquitted himself conscientiously and untiringly. The testimony of all who knew him is, that he was a good citizen, a good Christian, and a good priest. His labors, undertaken on his part with zeal and energy, have been of great profit to those who, at different periods, were committed to his pastoral care, and now that he has been taken from us by his Divine Master, "His memory is in benediction."

LUCIAN GALTIER, the subject of the present notice, was born in France, Department of Ardeches, A. D. 1811. From an early age, he looked forward to the priesthood as his vocation, and was a student of theology in the seminary of his native diocese, when Bishop LORAS, the then newly appointed prelate of Dubuque, arrived in Europe, in quest of laborers for the immense region confided to his spiritual charge. The missionaries whom the bishop persuaded to follow him to the wilds of Western America, were Rev. Jos. CRETIN, afterwards first bishop of St. Paul, Rev. Jos. PELLAMOURGUES, now vicar-general of Dubuque, Rev. A. RAVOUX, now vicar-general of St. Paul, Rev. Messrs. CAUSSE and PETIOT, who have since returned to France, and Rev. L. GALTIER. The party landed in New York in the fall of 1838. Messrs. GALTIER, RAVOUX, CAUSSE and PETIOT, who had not yet completed their studies, proceeded to Emmitsburg College, Md., where they remained about a year. They were ordained in Dubuque, Jan. 5th, 1840, being the first Catholic priests ever ordained on the northwestern side of the Mississippi River.

The Diocese of Dubuque comprised what was then the Territory of Iowa, the present State of Iowa, and as much of Minnesota as lies to the west of the Mississippi. The east side, though under the direct jurisdiction of the Bishop of Milwaukee, was, however, generally attended to by Dubuque priests, who, geographically, were in closer proximity than those of other dioceses. Apart from the voyages of the Jesuit Fathers, 200 and 150 years ago, the commencement of Catholicity in Minnesota dates from the year 1839. No doubt there had been, previously, Catholics in Minnesota, among the sol-

diers of the Fort and the traders; but up to that year they had had no church organization, no attendance from a clergyman. In the summer of 1839, Bishop Loras arrived at Fort Snelling, in company with Father Pellamourgues, to see what could be done, if anything, for Catholicity in that portion of his Diocese. They remained some time, partly at the Fort, partly at the St. Peter's trading post, (Mendota), and before leaving promised the soldiers and the employees of the American Fur Company, who professed the Catholic religion, that they soon would have a priest permanently located among them. Those were not days of frequent steamboat trips; so the Bishop was obliged, when returning to Dubuque, to confide himself to a little Indian canoe. The first night after leaving the Fort, he rested on the river bank beneath Dayton's Bluff, and often afterwards he spoke of the sore blisters, which the unusual labor of rowing inflicted on his hands.

One day in the spring of 1840, Bishop Loras heard the whistle of the first boat from St. Louis, nearing the wharf of Dubuque. He was told it was bound to Fort Snelling. He remembered his promise to send there a priest; he called on Father Galtier, who, since the time of his ordination, had resided at the cathedral. In an hour the latter was ready and on board the boat. We cannot relate better the facts that followed, than by copying a letter, which Father Galtier himself wrote, some three years ago, to Bishop Grace, of St. Paul, who had requested of him an account of his mission in Minnenesota:

"Prairie-du-Chien, January 14, 1864.

"Rt. Rev. Bishop:—Your favor of the 4th inst., I received this week. To comply with your wishes, I will try to give you, in a few lines, an imperfect sketch of my short stay, in what was then mostly Indian ground, and now is the most conspicuous and most promising part of your flourishing Diocese.

"On the 26th day of April, 1840, in the afternoon, a St. Louis steamboat, the first of the season, arrived at Dubuque, bound for St. Peter (Mendota) and Ft. Snelling. Rt. Rev. Dr. Loras immediately came to me, and told me he desired to send me towards the upper waters of the Mississippi. There was no St. Paul at the time; there was, on the site of the

present city, but a single log-house, occupied by a man named PHELAN, and steamboats never stopped there.

"The boat landed at the foot of Fort Snelling, then garrisoned by a few companies of Regular soldiers under command of Major PLYMPTON. The sight of the Fort, commanding from the elevated promontory the two rivers, the Mississippi and the St. Peter, (Minnesota,) pleased me; but the discovery, which I soon made, that there were only a few houses on the St. Peter side, and but two on the side of the Fort, surrounded by a complete wilderness, and without any signs of fields under tillage, gave me to understand that my mission and life must henceforth be a career of privation, hard trials and suffering, and required of me patience, labor and resignation. I had before me a large territory under my charge, but few souls to watch over. I introduced myself to Mr. CAMPBELL, a Scotch gentleman, the Indian Interpreter, to whom I was recommended by the bishop. At his house I received a kind welcome from his good wife, a charitable catholic woman. For about a month I remained there as one of the family. But, although well treated by all the members of the house, I did not, while thus living, feel sufficiently free to discharge my pastoral duties; so I obtained a separate room for my own use, and made of it a kitchen, a parlor and a chapel. Out of some boards I formed a little altar, which was opened out in time of service, and during the balance of the day folded up and concealed by drapery.

"In that precarious and somewhat difficult condition, I continued for over a year. On the Fort Snelling side, I had under my care, besides some soldiers, six families, RESCHE, PAPIN, QUINN, CAMPBELL, BRUCE and RESICKO, and on the St. Peter side, besides some unmarried men in the employ of the company, five families, FARIBAULT, MARTIN, LORD, and two TURPINS. No event worth noticing occurred, except some threatening alarms given by the Chippewas to the Dakotas. During that year, too, in the month of August, I returned sick from a visit I had made to a few families settled in the vicinity of Lake St. Croix. Prostrated by bilious fever and ague, at the military hospital, for nearly two months, I could not have recovered, were it not for the skill of Dr. TURNER, and the con-

tinued and kind attentions of his good lady. My grateful heart will never forget the relief I experienced at their hands. Both the officers and soldiers also showed me great respect and affection, and twice, some time after, although they had their chaplain, I had occasion to preach and offer the Holy Sacrifice in the Fort. What most grieved me, while sick, was the thought that no fellow priest was nearer than three hundred miles to me; but most unexpectedly, God, in his mercy, sent me one, whose visit seemed to me as that of an angel. Rt. Rev. Dr. De Forbin Janson, ex-Bishop of Nancy, France, was then visiting the Northwest; he arrived at the Fort, and hearing that I was sick, alighted immediately from the boat, received my confession, and spoke to me words of consolation and comfort. This was in August, 1840.

"A circumstance, rather sad in itself, commenced to better my situation, by procuring for me a new station and a variety in my scenes of labor. Some families, most of whom had left the Red River settlement, British America, on account of the flood and the loss of their crops, in the years 1837 and 1838, had located themselves all along the right bank of the Mississippi, opposite the Fort. Unfortunately some soldiers, now and then, crossed the river to the houses of these settlers, and returned intoxicated, sometimes remaining out a day or two, or more without reporting to their quarters. Consequently, a deputy-marshal from Prairie-du-Chien, was charged to remove the houses. He went to work, assisted by soldiers, and unroofed, one after another, the cottages, extending about five miles along the river. The settlers were forced to look for new homes; they located themselves about two miles below the cave. Already a few parties had opened farms in this vicinity; added to these, the new accessions formed quite a little settlement. Among the occupants of this ground were Rondeau, who had purchased the only cultivated claim in the place—that of Phelan, Vital Guerin, Pierre Bottineau, Gervais and his brother, &c., &c.—I deemed it my duty to visit occasionally those families, and set to work to choose a suitable spot for a church.

"Three points were offered. The first was La Pointe Basse or Pointe Leclair (now, on account of a sand bar in its vicinity,

commonly known as Pig's Eye bar.) I objected to this place; it was the extreme end of the settlement, and, being low ground, was exposed in high water to inundation. The idea of having the church one day swept down to St. Louis did not please me. Two and a half miles further up, on his claim, a Catholic, named CHARLES MOUSSEAU, offered to me an acre of his ground; but neither did this place suit my purpose. I was, indeed, looking ahead, to the future as well as to the present time. Steamboats could not stop here; the bank was too steep, and the space on the summit too narrow; communication would be difficult with the places of the other settlers up and down the river. After mature reflection, I resolved to put up the church as near as possible to the Cave, it being more convenient, on my way from St. Peter, to cross the river at that point, and that being the nearest spot to the head of navigation, outside the reservation line.

"Messrs. B. GERVAIS and VITAL GUERIN, two good, quiet farmers, owned the only ground that appeared likely to suit. They both consented to give sufficient land for a church, a garden, and a small grave-yard. I accepted the extreme eastern part of Mr. VITAL'S claim, and the extreme west of Mr. GERVAIS'.

"In the month of October, 1841, I had, on the above stated place, logs cut and prepared, and soon a poor log church, that would remind one of the stable of Bethlehem, was built. The nucleus of St. Paul was formed. On Nov. 1st, 1841, I blessed the new *Basilica*, smaller indeed than the Basilica of St. Paul, in Rome, but as well adapted as the latter for prayer and love to arise therein from pious hearts.

"The church was thus dedicated to St. Paul, and I expressed a wish that the settlement should be known by no other name. I succeeded. I had, previously to this time, fixed my residence at St. Peter, and as the name of PAUL is generally connected with that of PETER, and the gentiles being well represented in the new place in the persons of the Indians, I called it St. Paul. Thenceforth we could consider St. PAUL our protector —and as a model of apostolic life, could I have desired a better patron? With the great apostle I could repeat: 'When I

am weak, then I am powerful,'—a good motto, I am sure, even for an apostolic bishop.

"The name, St. Paul, applied to a town or city, seemed appropriate. The monosyllable is short, sounds well, and is understood by all denominations of Christians. When Mr. VITAL GUERIN was married, I published the banns as being those of 'a resident of St. Paul.' A Mr. JACKSON put up a store, and a grocery was opened at the foot of the GERVAIS claim. This soon brought steamboats to land there. Thenceforth the place was known as St. Paul Landing, and later on, as St. Paul. When some time ago an effort was made to change the name, I did all I could to oppose the project, by writing from Prairie du Chien.

"The families which I have mentioned as being on the Fort side, at the time of my arrival there, had afterwards to leave; only two remained. I could not do much good, by continuing to reside there. The St. Peter Trading Post was the only ground left me. I removed thither, determined to remain steadfast as a rock. Mr. FARIBAULT, the oldest pioneer of the place, a true gentleman, offered me a small house which I accepted; it was repaired, and I made of it my chapel, contented to reside in a small corner of it, until more favorable circumstances. I visited St. Paul regularly and occasionally St. Croix Settlement, then called Willow River, and now, if I am not mistaken, Hudson. In 1842, June 5th, Bishop LORAS gave confirmation to a few persons. During a short absence of mine, Father RAVOUX being at St. Peter, an accident threatened his life. One night while soundly sleeping in my little room, he was suddenly aroused by a tremendous cracking of the main beam, that supported the whole roof. Fortunately he was not hurt; calling for help, he removed everything to the house of Mr. FARIBAULT. Once more we had to make a mere room a temporary place for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Hearing of the accident, I left St. Paul, went to St. Peter, and at once took means to go to Chippewa Falls, in order to get the lumber needed for a new building. On, my return, I put men to work, and on the 2d day of Oct., 1842, I blessed the first church of St. Peter. From that time, up to the day of my removal, nothing deserving of notice happened, save the

passage of the venerable Bishop of St. Boniface, Mgr. PROVENCHER who for the first time, but not without much danger, went, via St. Paul and the U. S. to Canada, a new route hitherto unknown. On the 29th of Oct., the little bell of St. Peter's chapel was blessed. On the 25th of May, 1844, I was leaving to better hands the yet barren field of my first mission, not without feeling deep regret—not without leaving friends behind me. * * * * * * *

"LUCIAN GALTIER."

In relation to the buildings, spoken of in the above letter, we will state that Mr. CAMPBELL's house is still standing, it being one of the stone houses outside the enclosure of the Fort. The church in St. Peter, or Mendota, is also yet standing. The one in St. Paul was taken down some years ago; the logs are secure, and it is the intention to have them put together, as they formerly were, and thus have the old church preserved. This church fronted on Bench street, and was built on one of the lots of what is now called the Catholic Block. This Block is nothing else but the ground formerly occupied by Father GALTIER.

From the Cathedral registers we learn that the number of baptisms performed by Father GALTIER, while in the Northwest, were as follows: In 1840, 40; in 1841, 35; in 1842, 35; in 1843, 27. His flock was small, but dispersed as they were, themselves strangers to material comfort, it required no small degree of courage and self-denial in a clergyman to labor among them.

Father GALTIER, on his removal from the north, was placed in charge of the missions at Keokuk, Iowa. In 1848 he returned to France, intending to spend there the remainder of his life. He had been strongly pressed to take charge of the French congregation of the Cathedral at St. Louis, but refused. After some time spent in Europe, he again longed for the missionary life of an American priest, and again crossed the Atlantic. On his return, he was placed at Prairie du Chien, where he remained until his death, Feb. 21st, 1866.

He visited St. Paul in 1853, and in 1865, and thus had opportunities of seeing what his little chapel of St. Paul had

come to. Even if he did have the future in view, when he was selecting the site of that church, we may feel sure in asserting that he never, in his most sanguine dreams, fancied that the settlement would become what it is, and what it is destined to be. He loved our city and our State dearly; nothing in his old age used to afford him more pleasure than to meet with persons from St. Paul, and to enquire of them how our city was progressing. St. Paul, we are glad to say, remembers him; his friends take an especial pride in the fact that his death was noticed in the proceedings of the Historical Society, and that, not many months ago, the City Council bestowed his name on one of the streets of St. Paul.

June 10, 1867.

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